Metaphor as a Stylistic Feature in Biblical Texts of Retribution

Saja AbdulAmeer (M.A),
University of Babylon, College of Education for Human Sciences
sajaameer9595@gmail.com.

Prof. Riyadh T. K. Al-Ameedi (Ph.D.),
University of Babylon, College of Education for Human Sciences
alameedi.rtk@gmail.com

.**Abstract**

This paper considers the stylistic significance and effects of metaphor in Biblical texts of retribution. It aims to test the applicability of stylistics to Biblical texts of retribution. It is hypothesized that: (a) retribution texts serve as data of analysis for examining the applicability of stylistics (b) these texts utilize metaphor to achieve certain stylistic significance and effects. So, to analyze the data under scrutiny and achieve the aims, the study develops an eclectic model. The analysis has come up with a number of conclusions that verify the post

ملخص البحث

الدراسة الحالية تدرس أهداف ودلالات الاستعارة أسلوبيا في نصوص الجزاء في الكتاب المقدس. هذا وتهدف الدراسة إلى قياس مدى ملائمة علم الأسلوب في دراسة هذه النصوص وتفترض الدراسة أن: (أ) نصوص الجزاء تنفع كبيانات تحليل لقياس مدى ملائمة علم الأسلوب لدراسة هذه النصوص المقدسة، (ب) هذه النصوص تستخدم الاستعارة لتحقق أهداف ودلالات أسلوبية معينة وبالتالي فأن الدراسة طورت نموذج لتحليل البيانات موضوع الدراسة وتحقيق هداف الدراسة وقد جاء التحليل بعدد من النتائج التي أكدت صحة ما تم طرحة من فرضيات.

ed hypotheses.

1. Retribution: an Overview

Retribution is a teaching and a prime doctorin in Biblical texts. A large portion of the New Testament emphasizes its reality in the hereafter as part and parcel of the righteous judgment of the Almighty Lord, His wrath as well as gracious character. As a term '*retribution'*, literary, means "*repayment*". Particularly, the repay that is given in return for good deeds or evil deeds (Thorndike and Banhart, 1968: 807). Theologically, "retribution" is Divine punishment befalling the evil or blessing befalling the virtuous. It is the means by which the Almighty Lord treats people on the ground of what each just deserts. Almighty Lord punishes the disobedient of His commandments and at the same time rewards the obedient. It is in accordance with everyone deeds. As such, retribution is a Divine appropriate and correspondent response to the righteous, who espouse the right path, plus to the wicked, who choose to oppose that path. The first party is to be blessed and rewarded and the second to be cursed and punished. This principle of perfect and just universe is based on God's righteousness. This last definition of retribution is the one adopted by this paper after being adapted from Jervis (2015: 324) and Kangwa (2016: 1).

Moreover, retribution runs in this life and more perfectly in the life to come. So according to the time of its implementation, it falls into two types: retribution in the present life; and retribution in the Hereafter. The second type is the one of concern in this study.

Retribution runs in this life up to a point, but its real implementation is postponed, more precisely ' *treasured up*' to the day of judgment. Noticeably, the New Testament verses, as Eubank (2013: 243) argues, show that human beings must keep the Divine norms and earn treasure in heaven to go into the kingdom and that this compensation is superbly generous. Accordingly, retribution is of two forms: eternal life and welfare, commonly described as

'heaven' as a fate for the righteous and eternal destruction and fire, commonly described as 'hell' as a fate for the wicked.

3. Stylistics and Rhetoric

"Without classical rhetoric and poetics, there would be no stylistics as we know it today". This opening sentence of Burke (2014: 11) matches an earlier consideration of stylistics and rhetoric close relationship by Spencer (1986). The latter (ibid: 424) affirms that stylistics is " a new rhetoric" adjusted to the requirement of contemporary linguistics and literary field. While Spencer (ibid.) describes stylistics as " rhetoric's most direct heir", Burke (2014: 11) states that rhetoric is " the classical forbear(s) of contemporary stylistics". So, both agree that stylistics has its root not only in modern study of language but also in ancient Greek and Latin.

All in all, they have more than an area to share. Both concentrate not much on what is said but rather on how it is said. Also, their theoretical or secondary aim is one. Jointly, they try to identify functional features in language that bear a predictable potential regardless of by whom they are produced, such as the tropes (*See* Spencer, 1986: 424 and Fahnestock, 2011: 12). Recognizable distinctions can be noticed as well; mainly in their primary goals and methods. Focusing on the goal but not the method for relevance, stylistics practically aims to realize the style that is used regardless of whether it is used consciously or unconsciously. But rhetoric aims to study " a conscious mode of persuasion" (Spencer, 1986: 424 and Fahnestock, 2011: 12-3).

Enkvist (1985: 22) talks about " situational appropriateness" as a sharing area between stylistics and rhetoric. To him, such a sharing concern is enough to blur the boundaries between the two, with such a result that stylistics considers rhetoric as one of its auxiliaries and vice-versa for rhetoric.

According to Lambrou (2016: 98), instead of discussing the relation between stylistics and rhetoric, it is preferable to highlight rather " the stylistics of rhetoric":

Rhetorical language, then, can be seen as belonging to a specific ‘style’ of language that needs to accomplish a particular rhetorical function, and as such, relies on the careful selection and delivery of very specific language choices. It is not just the lexical choices that are crucial, but also how they are combined and structured within the context of the speech to convey very specific social and political ideologies.

4. Metaphor

Being pertain to relationship of similarity, metaphor is not so overt. In a metaphor, as Abrams and Harpham (2012: 130) show," a word or expression that in literal usage denotes one kind of thing is applied to a distinctly different kind of thing, without asserting a comparison". With metaphor there is not an explicit marker of similarity, as it is an implicit comparison:

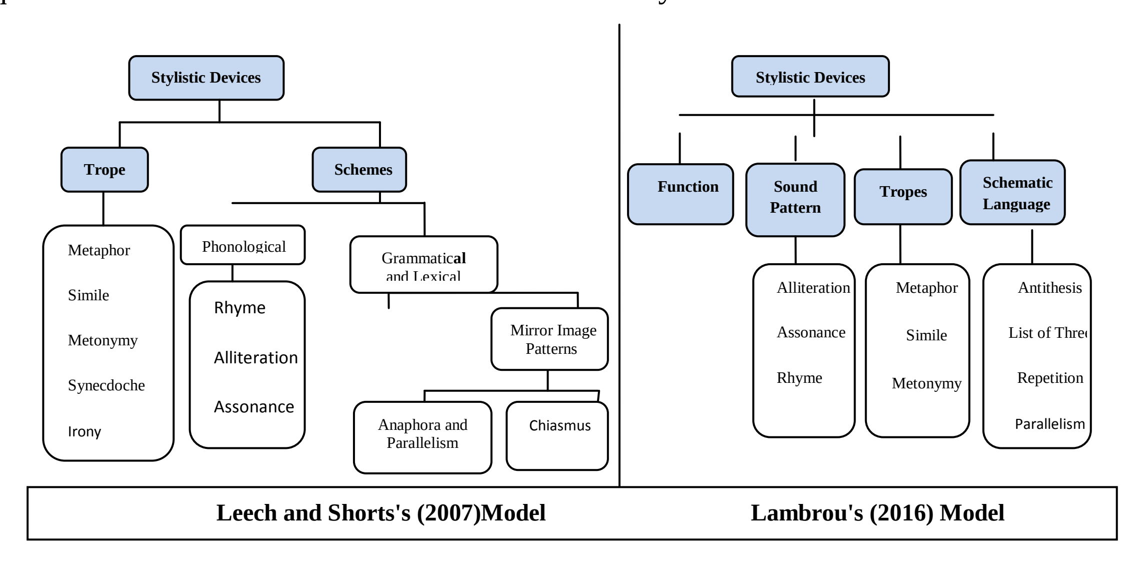
Where their worm dieth not quenched [Mark 9: 47].

Corbett (1965: 425) argues that one cannot deny its decorative primary function, yet metaphor is one way to reflect clearness and liveliness to the expressed message. It supports ones, as the case with most stylistic devices, with such means that can strike the balance between " the obvious and the obscure" and hence attracts one's attention and attain its effect. Cuddon (1998: 657) affirms it as a way to clarify and enhance an image, as well as its effect one's emotions. On his part, Smith (2009: 58) affirms that metaphor increases attitude change, has a specific aesthetic value and adds a persuasive impact on one's speech. Its use is

praised by Aristotle suggesting that it can help listeners " seize a new idea promptly" and " make the significance of contrasted ideas… easily felt".

5. The Model of Analysis

To analyze the data under scrutiny, a model of analysis is needed. Being so, the study adopts an eclectic model. It is concerned first with identifying the stylistic feature of metaphor to stop then at its significance and effect in its text. Leech and Short's (2007) model specially the ' *figures of speech*' and Lambrou's (2016) model of ' *Discourse stylistics*' seem quite suitable to follow to attain the aims of the study.



6. Data Analysis

Hereafter retribution in the Bible is widely spread along the Books of the New Testament, principally the four Gospels. The following is an analysis of four representative retribution texts from the Gospels.

Text 1.

{13:24} .. The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: {13:25} But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. {13:26} But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. {13:27} So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? {13:28} He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? {13:29} But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. {13:30} Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.[Matthew.13:24-30].

Metaphor is a pervasive feature along the text. The engagement of the receiver's attention and interest is fulfilled in these lines via the spread of metaphor, from its beginning till its end, as well as by repeating the metaphorical terms themselves more than once. In this text, ' good seed' and ' field' are metaphorically utilized to enhance the image while pointing out to good people_ those who respect and obey the Divine norms of Jesus teaching_ and the present world respectively. The text portraits the kingdom of heaven as the mission of spreading good and how it is confronted by some problems. His enemy is profited from the sleeping of some people including some of Jesus' followers, i.e., being absent from spiritual

company and/or being in non-exercise of grace to spread, sow, increase everything bad and evil including evil people. Such people are compared to ' tares', i.e., darnel which is a poisonous weed organically related to *' wheat'* and difficult to distinguish from it in its early stage of growth. So they are completely harmful. In contrast, the good people or the righteous are compared to *' wheat'* being completely useful. The metaphor of *'tars'* and *'wheat'* attracts attention and evokes the receivers' thinking.

The engagement of Jesus with teaching the Divine norms gives an opportunity to his *' enemy'*, i.e., the devil, as a vivid description, to spread as well his evilness. As such, it is something out of humans control that the good and the evil coexist in this world and they may grow next to each other in such a way that one may not be able to recognize between them. But such a state will not continue forever because at the end of the world the people of true faith will be realized and rewarded as those who follow their devils and be punished. Consequently, the evil with their evilness will be ended in a burning fire. That will make the kingdom of heaven once again full but with goodness and the good.

However, when the two kinds of seeds come out *' the servants'*, as a metaphor describing the true followers of Jesus or the *' the householder'* as another metaphor, came and asked him in such a manner that reveals and expresses not only their reverence and obedience calling him *' Sir'*, but also their surprise, disappointment and anxiety at the discovery of the evil or the wicked among them. Being told that *' an enemy'*, repeated for emphasis, has done this, motivates them to post a further question in which they wonder if they have the right to go and gather them up; seeking a solution for such a problem. That question gets not only a negative answer but also an explanation which stylistically rich with a repetition of the metaphorical terms *' tares and wheat'* which give it its desired persuasive effect.

However, the willingness of the *' servant'* to uproot the *' tares*' was prevented in order not to endanger the wheat. Both roots were already intertwined. Yet, not far that it would be easy to distinguish between the two. Jesus tells that Almighty Lord tolerated the wicked in the present life for the sake of his elect. That is, Almighty Lord avoids uprooting the young darnel because He values the wheat. However, such a state will not last for long as the time will come when Almighty Lord publicly distinguishes between them. The appointed time is Day of Retribution, implicitly compared to the *'harvest'* for their resemblance. It partakes in enhancing and intensifying the meaning more and brings the picture near to the receiver's mind. At the *' harvest'*, this responsibility will be given to specific angles of Almighty Lord *' the reapers'* as metaphorically pointed for the same purpose above indicated and to enhance and intensify the meaning. Thus, it is not the responsibility of anyone else who may randomly put himself into that position. The *' reapers'* will ' *gather together'* and *' bind in bundles'* the wicked *' tares'* as an indication to their complete separation from the righteous over and above to their future condition where they will be chained and tied tightly with other wicked who might be of the same degree of evilness. Then, they will be casted into a burning fire where they face but the wrath of Almighty Lord which will be everlasting and unquenchable. By contrast, the reapers will gather the righteous and let them enter the kingdom of heaven and be blessed by being with Jesus in *'My barn'*. *' Barn'* is metaphorically employed to confirm the meaning and affect emotion as it describes the reward that wait the righteous as a retribution to their good done.

Text 2.

{25:31} When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: {25:32} And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth [his] sheep from the goats: {25:33} And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. *{25:34} Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world* [Matthew, 25:31-46].

This text of retribution is replete with metaphor that spreads over it to enhance its meaning and bring it near to the minds of its receivers making it stick in them. The text asserts that *' the Son of the man'* will be back at the end of the age with absolute Divine support. He will be supported Divinely with *' his glory'*, as a metaphor describe implicitly the great power and authority, including the judicial authority, he will be with. Also, He will be accompanied by a glorious retinue, his holy myriads and/or ministering sprits; be implicitly compared to *' holy angles'*. They will be with Him both for state and service. They come to call the court, to gather the elect, to bundle the *' tares'*, to be witnesses of the righteous happiness and the wicked misery, and to do all that needed from them at this great solemnity.

In fact, such a return is but the beginning of retribution and final judgment. Clearly, the text insinuates how such a Divine duty is bestowed honorably to a human. The Almighty Lord gives *' the Son of the man'* the dignity to be the *' Judge'*, the *' King'*, as the text itself emphasizes and denotes later; for by him Almighty Lord will judge the world. This idea is expressed metaphorically in *' sit upon the throne'*, i.e., the throne of justice.

Obviously then, the text is concerned with showing the *' how'* meanwhile hiding the *' when'* of this back and return. The text employs future time *' shall come'*, *' shall he sit'* to imply the meaning in *' a day'* and in *' an hour'* of which humans are not aware. The time, as such, is left open to warn humans about living responsibly and be ready for the coming of *' the Son of the man'*.

However, being placed as a judge, every human no matter who, where, and /or when is, was, or will be on the face of the earth, all shall be summoned in front of His tribunal. The total inclusion is indicated by the term *' all nations'* in its generic meaning. Then, the separation is to start. Incidentally, the text uses, a metaphor used twice embarking antithesis to make the message of the text more clear and lively while connecting its ideas vividly and systematically; on the one hand, to reflect the underlying resemblance between *' sheep'* and *' the true believers'*; and between the *' goat'* and *' the false believers/ hypocrites'*, on the other. The sheep and the true believers are alike in trusting and depending entirely on their Almighty Lord Who cares for all their needs. Thus, they are calm in His presence and more obedient. Instead, the goats and the false believers share more than one negative feature, such as being: selfish, independent, concerned only with themselves; besides, they love doing what they want more than they love pleasing their Lord. Noticeably, Jesus in this text is concerned with showing the retribution, and consequently the separation, of sheep and goats; not that of sheep and wolves. This choice comes to show that the divergence between these very similar types is not hidden to their shepherd and appears very clearly to all others at the end of the day.

As a first consequence to this separation, the true believers will be set in a favored position as metaphorically denoted by *' on his right hand'*. The false believers, in contrast, will be set in disfavored position as metaphorically and briefly expressed by *' on the left'*. For the purpose of emphasizing the contrasted fates of both, antithesis with *' but'* as a conjunction are utilized in this verse. However, the real consequence of such separation is but to begin. *' The Son of the man'* in the following verses is implicitly compared to *' the king'* to bring His

leading role in that day more to the focus. Therefore, the king will give his order in a term of warm invitation to the merciful humans who are already separated in a position of favour to proceed further and enjoy the Divine *' gift'* the Almighty Lord prepares for His people.

Text 3.

{9:45} And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: {9:46} Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.…{9:49} For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. [Mark 9: 45-49].

This text of retribution utilizes metaphor more than once to make the image it portraits more near to the receivers; minds, evokes their thinking and interest to effect them deeply and persuade them. In this text Jesus commands his followers to refuse, dismiss, and do everything that it may entail or take, no matter what, to keep apart from that thing or cause which make them lose their next life. With no doubt, to take such a hindrance away is widely painful, but it is nothing to be contrasted to big win or loss in the Hereafter that waits all humans as their eternal fate. So, those who give such a sacrifice are promised to be granted with eternal *' life'*. *' Life'* is metaphorically used to signify eternal bliss, happiness, luxury and all the good in Almighty Lord's presence. Precious to mention, that *' life'* is implicitly compared to the *' kingdom of God'* here to enhance the receivers imagination and affect their emotion. This is on one hand. On the other hand, those who refuse offering such a sacrifice as a prove of their love to Jesus and preserve their faith are threatened with *'Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quench'*. Thus, the choice is in their hands. *' worm'* is a metaphor describes the reflections and reproaches of the wicked own conscience where it will never leave them, i.e., prey upon the damned soul for ever after. Metaphor, here, brings the misery the wicked will be with as a result of their wrong choice more to the mind of its receivers and attain its effectiveness Hence, the message in these lines is: one have to keep oneself separated from evil and sin to be near to the Almighty Lord in one own self.

The subsequent of the text emphasizes that meaning more, to affirm it further in the mind of its receivers. Again, a comparison between the two parties_ the one which does not sacrifice, and the one that does_ is focal to bring forth the huge contrast of each party fate. It tells that *' everyone'*_ though a general expression but limited in its reference to its context_ who does not take that warning into consideration and insist on giving no such sacrifice is certainly to be *' salted with fire'*. The metaphor of *'salt'*, here, is compared implicitly with fire comes to convey only the meaning of preservation; they will never be consumed thereby. To clarify more, the salt of the wicked is to live forever after dying where their pain, misery and grief will never cease. They prefer to save their salt to the Hereafter where its benefit is negative to them. It is but a preservation. In contrast, the second party are indicated with the metonymy *' every sacrifice'* to bring the light more on the significance and value of their sacrifice. Metonymy is a stylistic device which uses the name of an attribute instead of the name of a referent (Wales, 2011: 267). This party prefers, through their choice to be salted in this life, to benefit of that choice entirely in the Hereafter. That is, the salt will benefit not only in preserving but also in purifying and supporting them with Divine energy. All that, in turn, makes them deserve to get the Divine gift of *' life'*, i.e., of being in the kingdom of God in the Hereafter. Such a *' salt'*, then, is unquestionably good. The implicit comparison in these lines provides, then, a vivid description.

Text 4.

{5:24} Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life….{5:28} Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,..{5:30}..I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me [John 5: 24; 28; 30].

This text of retribution uses metaphor for four times to deepen the meaning in its receivers and thus accomplish more persuasion. So, to enrich the receivers' imagination, while emphasizing the meaning, *' death'* versus *' life'* is utilized metaphorically. In addition, *' but'*, as a conjunction, reflects and emphasizes the big contrast between the two images. It suggests that to have faith, to have a spiritual comfort, i.e., being implicitly compared to life. Faith is the power by which true believers overcome any temporary suffering and vanish any concern they may be confronted with. The reverse is completely true with those who have no faith, i.e., dead even if they may have apparent physical comfort; being temporary and fabulous.

Such words may seem not quite strange, especially if are taken in their surface meaning. The Old Testament asserts repeatedly the tenet of retribution in the present life. So Jesus talks about a familiar tenet to identify and establish a completely new, if not a reversed, tenet. To do so is stylistically significant. Jesus, here, prepares the minds of his receivers and absorbs their prompt refusal, if they first be presented to the tenet of retribution in the Hereafter.

Although retribution in the present life deserves to be stopped at and think of, retribution in the Hereafter is the real one that deserves to be taken into consideration, think it over and wonder or be astonished at over and again. The text affirms that what is more important and need to consider is the fact that " *the hour is coming*". Here, the Day of Retribution is implicitly compared to *' the hour'* for their resemblance in coming sooner; indicates short time. Besides, the definite article *' the'* with *' hour'* indicates clearly that it is appointed and fixed to an hour. So very punctual is this great appointment. However, the near coming of the hour is supported further by the present continuous of the phrase itself *' is coming'*. That is, it is certainly to come, near everyday than the other, so near at the door that it may be said to come. It is definite in its reality and soon coming but with no exact tell of when, to urge humans be in constant watch to their deeds. Once it is present, all the dead people of every age and nation will be restored to life directly after they hear the voice of, ' the son of the man', i.e., all people will first die then *' his voice'* will restore them again to life to be rewarded or punished. contrast of each party retribution. It is a fair retribution in a fair judgment by a fair Almighty Lord Who knows every single detail. What supports that meaning more is the repetition of the terms *' my own'* and *' will'*. Crucial to bring up, in the Bible as a whole and the New Testament in particular the term *' Father'* often appears as a metaphor to *' the God'*. It refers, among what it may refer to, to the Almighty Lord's role as the life-giver, the powerful and authority protector.

7. Conclusion

The study shows that Biblical texts of retribution can be studied stylistically via focusing on their stylistic features and effects. Specifically, it reflects that metaphor, as a stylistic feature, is widely spread along the text of retribution. It is utilized to create various significant effects that help in clarifying the correct choice the humans have to follow to attain everlasting win in ' *heaven'*, and avoid the wrong choice that leads but to ' *hell'* as well as in persuading its receivers in its message. Besides, it helps in conveying retribution in such a manner that sticks in the mind of its receivers by bringing the image of retribution and all

the issues related to it so near to the receivers' mind. It evokes not only thinking, imagination, and interest of its receivers but also making them live retribution in all events by its vivid description.

References

Abrams, M. and Harpham, G.(2012). **A Glossary of Literary Terms** (10^{th} ed.). Boston: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

Burke, M. (2014). "Rhetoric and Poetics: The Classical Heritage of Stylistics". In Burke, M. **The Routledge Handbook of Stylistics.** New York: Routledge, pp.11-30.

Corbett, E. (1965). **Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student**. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cuddon, J. (1998). **Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory**.(4^{th} ed.). London: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Enkvist, N. (1985). "Text and discourse linguistics, Rhetoric, and Stylistics". In Van Dijk, T.(eds.) **Discourse and Literature**. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp. 11-38.

Eubank, N. (2013). **" What does Matthew Say about Divine Recompense? On the Misuse of the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (20.1-16) "**. A Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Vol. 35, No. 3, pp. 242-262.

Fahnestock, J. (2011). **Rhetorical Style: The Uses of Language in Persuasion.** Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hampton, J. (2007). **The Intrinsic Worth of Persons: Contractarianism in Moral and Political Philosophy**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jervis. L. (2015). **"Divine Retribution in Romans"**. A Journal of Bible and Theology, Vol. 69, No. 3, pp. 323-337.

Kangwa, J. (2016). **" The role of the theology of retribution in the growth of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in Africa**". A Journal of Verbum et Ecclesia, Vol. 37, No. 1, pp. 1- 9. (Online) http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v37i1.1542.

Lambrou, M. (2016). " Discourse Stylistics" In Sotirova (eds.). **The Bloomsbury Companion to Stylistics**. London: Bloomsbury Academic Publishing Plc.

Leech and Short, M. (2007). **Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose** (2^{nd} ed.). Edinburgh Gate: Pearson Education Limited.

Spencer, A. (1986). **"An Apologetic for Stylistics in Biblical Studies".** A Journal of JETS, Vol. 29, No. 4, pp. 419-427.

Smith, Stephen E. (2009). "**The Poetry of Persuasion: Early Literary Theory and Its Advice to Legal Writers"**. Journal of Association of Legal Writing Directors. Vol. 6, pp. 56-74.

Thorndike, E. and Barnhart, C. (1968). **High School Dictionary** (5^{th} ed.). Glenview: Scott, Foresman and Company.

Wales, K.(2011). **A Dictionary of Stylistics**(3^{rd} ed.). London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.